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Tmutarakan'

A. D. STOKES

It was in 988, according to the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*,¹ that Vladimir I made his son Mstislav his viceroy in Tmutarakan'.² Obviously, by this date the town had been in Russian hands for a number of years, yet this is the earliest reference to Tmutarakan' in Russian sources. Its early history as a Russian possession remains obscure. When did the Slavs first settle in the area? When did Tmutarakan' itself first emerge as an important Russian centre? When, and in what circumstances, did it become a part of the Kievan Russian state? These are the questions left unanswered by the written sources; and the solutions offered by historians have been diverse and contradictory.³

G. V. Vernadsky is one of the latest scholars to attempt to clear up the mystery. He contends that a Russian kaganate centred on Tmutarakan' existed in the first half of the 9th century. It had been established, in Vernadsky's opinion, by the Varangians, who had reached the sea of Azov via the Donetsk-Don waterway, which they had seized in the 8th century.⁴ Vernadsky's theories have been rejected by the majority of scholars, who rightly point out that they are based on extremely hypothetical premisses.⁵ But a purely negative rejection of these theories is not enough, for there are few problems of 9th and 10th century Russian history in the elucidation of which a "Tmutarakan" solution has not been offered at one time or another. And this solution has usually merely served to increase the confusion of hypothesis and counter-hypothesis which characterises the specialist literature on the period. Some scholars have considered that Tmutarakan' was the centre from which the earliest Russian attacks were launched on Constantinople and on the Byzantine cities on the Black sea.⁶ Acceptance of this view has led to the

¹ *Povest' Vremennykh Let*, ed. V. P. Adrianova-Peretts, Moscow, 1950, hereinafter referred to as *Povest'* in the text and *PVL* in the footnotes.

² *PVL*, I, p. 83.

³ For a summary of the various views, see A. N. Nasonov, 'Tmutarakan' v istorii vostochnoy Yevropy' (*Istoricheskiye zapiski*, 6, Moscow, 1940, pp. 79–80); I. I. Lyapushkin, 'Slavyano-russkiye poseleniya IX–XII st. na Donu i Tamani po arkhologicheskim pamyatnikam' (*Materialy i issledovaniya po arkheologii SSSR*, 6, Moscow, 1941, pp. 191–201).

⁴ G. V. Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia*, New Haven, 1943, ch. vii; *idem*, *Kievan Russia*, New Haven, 1948, pp. 21 ff.; *idem*, *The Origins of Russia*, Oxford, 1959, pp. 174–201.

⁵ See the reviews of *Ancient Russia* by: V. Minorsky, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, XIII, 62, London, 1945; B. H. Sumner, *The English Historical Review*, LX, London, 1945; M. N. Tikhomirov, *Voprosy istorii*, 4, Moscow, 1946; S. Tolstov, *Voprosy istorii*, 4, 1946; D. Obolensky, 'Professor Vernadsky's History of Ancient and Medieval Russia' (*Oxford Slavonic Papers*, V, Oxford, 1954); also F. Dvornik, *The Making of Central and Eastern Europe*, London, 1949, pp. 305–14.

⁶ Cf. D. I. Ilovaysky, *Istoriya Rossii*, I, Moscow, 1876, pp. 11 ff.; E. E. Golubinsky, *Istoriya russkoy tserkvi*, I/1, Moscow, 1901, pp. 35 ff.; N. Polonskaya, 'K voprosu o khrisianstve na Rusi do Vladimira' (*Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniya*, 71, Petrograd, 1917, pp. 44–9).

belief that it was the Russians in Tmutarakan' who were first converted to Christianity, following the attack on Constantinople of 860;⁷ and that the archbishop of Tmutarakan' was the primate of the Russian church from 988 to 1037.⁸ The ramifications are endless, and it is therefore essential to return to the root of the problem and to attempt to establish the date of the acquisition of the town by the Russians in the light of the concrete evidence at our disposal.

Archaeology, perhaps the most reliable source for the period before the 9th century, provides no evidence of early Slav settlements in the area of the lower Don–Taman' peninsula.⁹ In the 7th and 8th centuries A.D., and in general before the coming of the Magyars, Slav colonists had not crossed the line of the lower Don in any numbers.¹⁰ The most compact group of Slavs in the area inhabited the basin of the upper Severskiy Donets,¹¹ while the few who may have settled farther to the south, among the Alans, were the exceptions.¹² In the 8th century the Severskiy Donets Slavs began to move away, probably in the direction of the Dnieper, but they were soon replaced by a fresh influx of Slav colonists, the Severians and Vyatichi, from the north. New settlements, dating to the 8–10th centuries appear in the basins of the Psol and Vorskla, and then, for the first time, along the upper Don and the Donets. It was only later that the Slavs reached the lower Don, the sea of Azov and the Taman' peninsula; and they were not firmly established in this south-eastern corner before the 9–10th centuries.¹³ Moreover, even for this latter period there is no evidence to indicate that there had been a Russian centre of any importance here.¹⁴ In fact, the earliest known Slav-Russian antiquities in the Tmutarakan' area date from the second half of the 10th century. They are found in large settlements which had owed their existence to the fact that they had been centres of trade or administration, or that they had been of strategic value.

⁷ Golubinsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 35 ff.; Polonskaya, *op. cit.*, pp. 33–80; V. Parkhomenko, *Nachalo khristianstva Rusi*, Poltava, 1913, pp. 43–65; W. Zaikyn, 'Zarys dziejów ustroju kościoła wschodnio-słowiańskiego' (*Archiwum Towarzystwa Naukowego we Lwowie*, Dział II, Tom XXIV, Zeszyt 1, Lwów, 1939, pp. 42–3).

⁸ Vernadsky, *Kievan Russia*, pp. 67–9; *idem*, 'The Status of the Russian Church during the First Half-Century following Vladimir's Conversion' (*The Slavonic and East European Review*, XX, 1941, pp. 296 ff.); *idem*, 'Byzantium and Southern Russia' (*Byzantion*, 15, Boston, Mass., 1940–1, pp. 67 ff.); *idem*, *The Origins of Russia*, pp. 301–3.

⁹ Lyapushkin, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

¹⁰ Yu. V. Got'ye, *Zheleznyy vek v vostochnoy Yevrope*, Moscow, 1930, p. 89.

¹¹ P. N. Tret'yakov, *Vostochno-slavyanskiye plemena*, 2nd ed., Moscow, 1953, p. 255.

¹² Got'ye, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

¹³ Tret'yakov, *op. cit.*, pp. 256–9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 258. Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia*, p. 317, emphasises the dangers of the *argumentum a silentio*, and adds: 'We may agree that no traces of a specific culture have as yet been found in such-and-such a region, but this does not necessarily mean that no such traces will be found in future.' This of course is true, but it is equally dangerous to base a theory on the assumption that supporting evidence will be found.

This shows that the Slavs were not the autochthonous population of the area, and that they won the principality of Tmutarakan' by conquest not by colonisation.¹⁵ Consequently, the problem to be solved is the date of the conquest of the base by the Russians.

But first, before attempting to establish this date, we must point out that we agree with those who have remained unconvinced by Vernadsky's hypothesis that a Russian kaganate centred on Tmutarakan' had been created by the Varangians and their Slav allies in the first half of the 9th century.¹⁶ For while it seems likely that the Varangians were first drawn eastwards to the Caspian and not southwards to the Black sea and Byzantium, it was the Volga, not the Donets-Don waterway, that was their highroad.¹⁷ Moreover, even the admission that the Varangians penetrated to this south-eastern area by way of the Volga at an early date brings us no nearer to a solution of the problem, for the written sources do not so much as hint at the existence of a Varangian centre near Tmutarakan'.

The earliest written source that is usually quoted in this connection is the well-known appendix to the 'Life' of St Stephen of Surozh,¹⁸ which describes a raid on Surozh by the Russian Prince Bravlin, who was subsequently converted to Christianity. It is taken to indicate that the Russians were active in the Black sea area not long after 786, the year in which St Stephen died.¹⁹ In fact, from the point of view of the problem of Tmutarakan', the evidence of this source is worthless. The episode described in the appendix to the 'Life' has too legendary a flavour to be accepted as historical fact without strong supporting evidence; and although it may not be agreed that it reflects at second-hand Igor's campaign of 941,²⁰ it must be admitted that it would be extremely difficult to date the

¹⁵ Got'ye, *op. cit.*, p. 90; Lyapushkin, 'Slavyano-russkiye poseleniya IX-Xvv. na Donu i Tamani' (*Kratkiye soobshcheniya o dokladakh i polevykh issledovaniyakh Instituta Istorii Material'noy Kul'tury*, 6, Moscow, 1940, pp. 90-1).

¹⁶ Cf., for example, Sumner, *op. cit.*, p. 108; Obolensky, *op. cit.*, p. 508.

¹⁷ L. Niederle, *Slavyanskiye drevnosti*, Moscow, 1956, p. 148. The whole section devoted to Varangian penetration of the Azov area in Vernadsky's *Ancient Russia* is purely hypothetical and cannot be accepted as a basis for any firm conclusions. Cf. also Got'ye, *op. cit.*, p. 258. On the impossibility of the Donets-Don waterway, see Tolstov, *op. cit.*, p. 120; Tikhomirov, *op. cit.*, p. 127. In his latest work, *The Origins of Russia*, Vernadsky has abandoned this theory, but the new hypothesis by which he replaces it (pp. 171-81) is even less convincing.

¹⁸ In Golubinsky, *op. cit.*, I/1, pp. 53-4. For the full text of the 'Life', see V. G. Vasil'yevsky, *Trudy*, III, Petrograd, 1915, pp. 77-98.

¹⁹ Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia*, p. 80; *idem*, 'The Problem of the Early Russian Campaigns in the Black Sea Area' (*The American Slavic and East European Review*, VIII, New York, 1949, pp. 1-9); *idem*, *The Origins of Russia*, pp. 181-4; Golubinsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-62.

²⁰ This is the view put forward by Germaine da Costa Louillet, 'Y eût-il des invasions russes dans l'Empire Byzantin avant 860?' (*Byzantion*, 15, Brussels, 1940-1, pp. 231-48). Shakhmatov, 'Korsunskaya legenda o kreshchenii Vladimira' (*Sbornik v chest' V. I. Lamanskogo*, St Petersburg, 1906, pp. 1149-50), considered that it was an echo of the story of Vladimir I's conversion in Kherson.

raid with even approximate accuracy. But the question of the authenticity and reliability of the source is irrelevant, as there is nothing in it to suggest that the raid was launched from Tmutarakan' or any other base in the Azov-Black sea area. Prince Bravlin—if this was indeed his name²¹—is said to have come from Novgorod,²² and even if this information is open to doubt because of the distance involved, there is nothing to prevent us from assuming that the Russian raiders had a base on the Dnieper or anywhere else:²³ one guess is as good as another.²⁴

Neither can the evidence of the 'Annals of St Bertin', recorded under the year 839,²⁵ be accepted as proof of the existence of a Russian kaganate in the Azov area. Here we learn that a Russian embassy which had first visited Constantinople had been sent on to Louis I at Ingelheim by the Emperor Theophilus. The Russians could not return home from Constantinople by the way they had come because their path was blocked by hostile barbarians, and Theophilus therefore asked Louis I to allow them to cross his territory instead. However, at Ingelheim the Russians were discovered to be Swedes, and Louis decided it would be safer to arrest them. There is nothing in the story to suggest that the embassy had come from Tmutarakan'. It is true that they said that their ruler bore the title of *kagan* (*rex illorum Chacanus vocabulo*),²⁶ and that this may indicate that Khazar influence was, or had been, strong in the area from which they had come; but as the Khazars had at one time controlled a wide area of southern Russia, including Kiev, the use of the title does not help us to locate it.²⁷ Moreover, if the

²¹ The name is discussed in N. T. Belyayev, 'Rorik Yutlandskiy i Ryurik Nachal'noy Letopisi' (*Seminarium Kondakovianum*, III, Prague, 1929, p. 220). See also Vernadsky, *The Origins of Russia*, p. 182.

²² Golubinsky, *op. cit.*, I/1, p. 53.

²³ If anything, there is perhaps a vague hint that the raiders did in fact come from the direction of the Dnieper to be found in the order in which the towns raided are placed: 'pleniv (stranu) ot Korsuni do Kerchi . . . Vozvratite vse, skol'ko my nagrabilisvyashchennykh sosudov v Korsuni v Kerchi i vezde . . . Day obeshchaniye Bogu, chto otpustish' vsekh plennikov . . . kotorykh vzyal ot Korsuni do Kerchi' (Golubinsky, *op. cit.*, I/1, pp. 53-4). In each case Kerch is mentioned after Kherson, which seems to suggest that the raiders came from the west and not from the direction of the sea of Azov.

²⁴ For a complete review of all the problems raised by this appendix to the 'Life' of St Stephen and of the literature on the subject, see A. A. Vasiliev, *The Russian Attack on Constantinople in 860*, Mediaeval Academy of America, Publication No. 46, 1946, Cambridge (Mass.), 1946, pp. 70-89. Vasiliev came to the conclusion that 'As an historical source the *Life of St. Stephen of Surozh* must be eliminated; its text may have some interest for the history of old Russian literature' (p. 89). In spite of Vernadsky's reply ('The Problem of the Early Russian Campaigns in the Black Sea Area', pp. 1-9), it is difficult to disagree with this opinion.

The 'Life of St. George of Amastris' will not be considered here, as it seems clear that any historical evidence it may contain refers to Igor's attack on Constantinople of 941—cf. Vasiliev, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-9; G. da Costa-Louillet, *op. cit.*

²⁵ MGH, *Scriptores*, I, Hanover, 1826, p. 434.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ The title was apparently adopted by the rulers of Kiev, as the Metropolitan Ilarion refers to Vladimir I as a *kagan* in the *Slovo o zakone i blagodati*—cf. *Pamyatniki drevnerusskoy*

embassy had come from Tmutarakan', no hostile tribes could have prevented them from returning home by the most direct route, across the Black sea. As Tolstov points out, the reference to the hostile tribes rather suggests that the kaganate was centred on Kiev.²⁸

Very similar problems are raised by the accounts of the Russian attack on Constantinople of 860, for while the attack itself is an indisputable historical fact, the sources do not identify the base from which it was launched. In a recent exhaustive monograph on the subject, Vasiliev has demonstrated that it must have been Kiev,²⁹ but Vernadsky, while accepting many of Vasiliev's conclusions, has nevertheless attempted to prove that the operation was organised jointly by the Russians in Kiev and Tmutarakan', with the latter playing the leading rôle.³⁰ Vernadsky's argument that the Kievan Russians were not strong enough to mount such an attack alone is entirely unconvincing.³¹ It is a statement of opinion unsupported by facts. But the consequences of the attack might seem to lend weight to the idea that Russians in Tmutarakan' had some hand in the expedition; and it is this aspect of the problem that deserves further consideration. The Russian raiders were later converted to Christianity and accepted a bishop appointed by the patriarch of Constantinople, but the sources which tell of these events are somewhat contradictory in their testimony and omit certain vital pieces of information. In an encyclical letter to the eastern patriarchs, written in 867, the Patriarch Photius of Constantinople claimed that it was he who had first converted the Russians and sent them a pastor and bishop.³² But in his 'Life' of his grandfather Basil I (876-86), Constantine Porphyrogenitus affirms that the conversion took place in Basil's reign when Ignatius had replaced Photius as patriarch, and that it was an archbishop who was appointed to minister to the Russians.³³ The Russian sources introduce fresh complications. The early chronicles, including the *Povest'*, give a brief description of the campaign and name Askold and Dir as the Russian leaders; but they do not mention the subsequent acceptance of Christianity

tserkovno-uchitel'noy literatury, ed. A. I. Ponomarev, I, St Petersburg, 1894, p. 70. At one time the Polianians paid tribute to the Khazars (cf. *PVL*, I, p. 16), and Kiev itself was known by the Khazar name *Sambatas* (cf. Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De Administrando Imperio*, ed. G. Moravcsik and R. J. H. Jenkins, Budapest, 1949, p. 56); cf. also V. Moshin, 'Nachalo Rusi' (*Byzantinoslavica*, III, Prague, 1931, p. 53, n. 4).

²⁸ S. Tolstov, *op. cit.*, p. 121. Dvornik, *op. cit.*, p. 63, on the other hand, goes too far in assuming that the embassy had come from Khazaria. If this had been the case, it would have been strange indeed to send them back *via* Germany.

²⁹ Vasiliev, *The Russian Attack on Constantinople in 860*, pp. 169-75.

³⁰ Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia*, pp. 341-4; *idem*, *The Origins of Russia*, pp. 213-26.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 212, 217-18.

³² Photius, *Epistolae, Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeco-Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, CII, Paris, 1860, cols. 736-8.

³³ Theophanes Continuatus, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeco-Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, CIX, Paris, 1863, cols. 736-7.

by the attackers.³⁴ However, much the same story as that told in Constantine's 'Life' of Basil is repeated in the 16th-century 'Nikon Chronicle'. According to this chronicle, the Russians promised to accept baptism and asked for a bishop to be sent to them. But when the bishop arrived, they had second thoughts and demanded convincing proof of the power of God. A bible was thrown on a fire, and when it did not burn and was retrieved from the flames unmarked, they agreed to become Christians. The 'Nikon Chronicle' also follows the *Povest'* and the Slavonic translation of Hamartolus³⁵ in identifying Askold and Dir as the leaders of the Russian force.³⁶

None of the sources tells us the location of the bishopric, though the references in the early Russian chronicles to Askold and Dir, two princes who certainly ruled in Kiev, clearly imply that the latter was the seat of the new bishop.³⁷ And since all the sources are agreed that it was those who attacked Constantinople who were converted, Vasiliev's conclusions on the origin of the attack would seem to settle the issue. But the difficulty here is the silence of the early Russian chronicles, which has been used as an argument against the view that the bishop was appointed to Kiev.³⁸ The establishment of a church hierarchy in Kiev in the middle of the 9th century should surely have been an event of major importance for the Kievan chroniclers: yet apparently they chose to ignore it. Clearly, any evidence, however slight, suggesting an alternative location for the bishopric, would add considerable weight to the objection. In the past—i.e. before the publication of Vasiliev's monograph—the appearance of the see of *Τυματαρχα* or Tmutarakan' in the Byzantine *Notitia* of the period led some scholars to believe that they had found such evidence;³⁹ and Vernadsky continues to hold this view in his latest work.⁴⁰ Indeed, this is the only concrete fact that he can offer in support of his statement that the see of the first bishopric was in Tmutarakan'. It is therefore worth taking a closer look at the *Notitia*.

The see of Tamatarkha, or Tmutarakan', is noted for the first

³⁴ *PVL*, I. p. 19.

³⁵ *Khronika Georgiya Amartola*, ed. V. M. Istrin, I, Petrograd, 1920, p. 511.

³⁶ 'Patriarshaya ili Nikonovskaya Letopis', *Polnoye sobraniye Russkikh letopisey*, IX, St Petersburg, 1862, p. 13.

³⁷ In speaking of a bishop, I accept the view that Photius erected the first Russian see and that Ignatius only continued his work by raising it to the status of an archbishopric. The contradictions in the Byzantine sources are to be explained by the hostility of Constantine Porphyrogenitus towards Michael III and Photius. He wanted to record that an archbishop had been appointed in the reign of Basil I by Ignatius, but to do so he had first to explain how the Russians had been converted. As he could not bring himself to admit that this had been the work of Photius, he was obliged to attribute it to Ignatius—cf. H. Grégoire, 'Études sur le neuvième siècle' (*Byzantion*, VIII, Brussels, 1933, pp. 531–4).

³⁸ Vernadsky, *The Origins of Russia*, p. 225.

³⁹ Golubinsky, *op. cit.*, I/1, pp. 47–9.

⁴⁰ Vernadsky, *loc. cit.*

time in a list of bishoprics of the eparchy of Gothia, included in the *Notitia* published by de Boor in 1891.⁴¹ But this does not mean that such a bishopric actually existed. Vernadsky himself has argued that the list only represents a project drawn up in the 860s as a result of St Cyril's mission to the Khazars.⁴² We can now be sure that it was only a project; but it was conceived in the middle of the 8th century, before the Khazars had officially adopted Judaism and at a time when Byzantium could still hope to convert them to Christianity.⁴³ The list shows how the Christian church in the area would have been organised if these hopes had been realised; and the inclusion of the see of Tmutarakan' can therefore have no connection with the Russian attack of 860.⁴⁴ A reference to *Βαάνης τῶν Μαστράβων* among the bishops who attended Photius's council of 879–80⁴⁵ is equally unproductive. Golubinsky agreed with Le Quien that *Μαστράβων* was a corruption of *Ματράχων*, i.e. Tmutarakan', and he thought that he had found here the bishop sent by Photius to the repentant raiders of Constantinople.⁴⁶ But it has now been established beyond all doubt that Baanes was the Armenian Bishop Vahan of Matravon in Taron.⁴⁷ We are on somewhat firmer ground with the *Notitia* published between 972 and 976, in the reign of John Tzimiskis, in which the archiepiscopal see of Tmutarakan' figures; but once again it brings us no nearer to a solution of the problem, as Honigmann has shown that the see cannot have been established before 934.⁴⁸

The mere fact that these Byzantine *Notitia* have proved to be irrelevant does not of course preclude the possibility that the see of the first Russian bishopric was nevertheless in Tmutarakan': their evidence is purely negative. But then there is no other source that has a positive contribution to make. We are left with Photius and Constantine Porphyrogenitus as the only two writers who mention the 9th century community of Christian Russians and, as we have seen, they do no more than announce its existence. Kiev therefore remains the most likely site of the bishopric. Photius is after all

⁴¹ C. de Boor, 'Nachträge zu den *Notitiae Episcopatumum*' (*Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, XII, Gotha, 1891, p. 531).

⁴² Vernadsky, 'Byzantium and Southern Russia', p. 70. Cf. also V. A. Moshin, 'Nikolay Episkop Tmutarakanskiy' (*Seminarium Kondakovianum*, V, 1932, p. 52).

⁴³ Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea*, Mediaeval Academy of America, Publication No. 11, 1936, Cambridge (Mass.), pp. 102–4.

⁴⁴ Vernadsky, *The Origins of Russia*, p. 225, admits that the list may have been compiled in the 8th century, but does not seem to see that the earlier date would invalidate his theory.

⁴⁵ M. le Quien, *Oriens Christianus*, I, Paris, 1740, col. 1325A.

⁴⁶ Golubinsky, *op. cit.*, I/1, pp. 48–9.

⁴⁷ Ernest Honigmann, 'Studies in Slavic Church History' (*Byzantion*, 17, Boston, Mass., 1944–5, pp. 131–2); N. Adontz, 'L'Âge et l'origine de l'Empereur Basile I' (*Byzantion*, 9, Brussels, 1934, pp. 259–60).

⁴⁸ Honigmann, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

unlikely to have established an episcopal see in an area where there was not already a Christian community of some size;⁴⁹ and we can assume that there had been such a community in Kiev before 860. Even in those early days it was a flourishing centre of commerce, and its trade relations with the Byzantine cities on the Black sea and with the Christian Goths of the Crimea must have led to the conversion of some of its inhabitants. It should also not be forgotten that all the later evidence of Christianity in Russia before the official conversion of Vladimir I in 988 relates to Kiev, which indicates that the city had a long tradition of Christianity behind it. Furthermore, as many scholars have pointed out, it was evidently remembered in Kiev that Askold had been a Christian, as a church was later built over his grave.⁵⁰

The attitude of the early Kievan chroniclers has still to be explained. Levchenko considers that their silence was due, first, to a misconceived respect for the memory of Vladimir I—a desire not to detract from his achievements by revealing that he had done no more than had been done by previous Kievan rulers over a century earlier; and, secondly, to the fact that the Christian community and its hierarchy had been swept away when Oleg, the pagan conqueror from the north, captured the city in 882.⁵¹ These explanations are individually unsatisfactory and mutually contradictory. The second implies that it had been forgotten that Askold had been a Christian: the first, that the information had been consciously suppressed. In addition, if the early chroniclers had feared that the story of the previous baptism of a Kievan ruler might dim Vladimir's glory, would they not also have ignored the conversion of his grandmother Olga?⁵² It was Askold and Dir themselves, not the fact that at least one of them had been a Christian, that presented the chroniclers with a problem. These early historians had set themselves the task of establishing the exclusive claim to power in Russia of the descendants of Rurik, and as Askold and Dir were not related to Rurik, they did all they could to minimise the rôle of these two independent princes in Kievan history.⁵³ If they had revealed that the 'usurpers' had been the first of the Russian

⁴⁹ See F. Dvornik, *Les Slaves, Byzance et Rome au IXe Siècle, Travaux de l'Institut d'Études Slaves*, IV, Paris, 1926, p. 143.

⁵⁰ *PVL*, I, p. 20. Cf. also A. L. Pogodin, 'Varyazhskiy period v zhizni knyazya Vladimira' (*Vladimirskiy sbornik*, Belgrade, 1938, p. 21); Parkhomenko, *op. cit.*, pp. 72–4; M. V. Levchenko, *Ocherki po istorii russko-vizantiyskikh otnosheniy*, Moscow, 1956, p. 88.

⁵¹ Levchenko, *loc. cit.*

⁵² Olga's conversion is recorded in the *PVL* s.a. 955—cf. *PVL*, I, pp. 44–5.

⁵³ Cf. the story of the capture of Kiev and the killing of Askold and Dir by Oleg in 882, in which Oleg is made to say: 'Vy nesta knyazya, ni roda knyazha, no az yesm' rodu knyazha', *PVL*, I, p. 20; also the comments on the chroniclers' aims in A. A. Shakhmatov, *Razyskaniya o drevneyshikh russkikh letopisnykh svodakh*, St Petersburg, 1908, p. 293.

princes to accept Christianity and to permit the creation of an organised church, they would also have been obliged to explain that these achievements had later been nullified by the pagan descendants of Rurik. This the chroniclers were not prepared to do, and they chose instead to pass over the whole episode in silence.

The first definite and unambiguous clue to the existence of a Russian base on the Taman' peninsula is to be found in the treaty concluded by the Grand Prince Igor with Byzantium in 944, the text of which has been preserved in the *Povest'*.⁵⁴ But the significance of the relevant clauses can best be assessed in the light of the evidence of certain oriental sources. The most important of these is Mas'udi, who gives an account of the Russian Transcaucasian campaign of 913–14. Of particular interest is his reference to a Khazar garrison which barred the way to the Caspian and held up the Russian expedition until permission to pass had been obtained from the Khazar kagan.⁵⁵ Mas'udi's description of the location of the garrison has led some historians to believe that it was stationed at Tmutarakan'; and consequently they have cited the passage as positive proof that the town was not in Russian hands before 914.⁵⁶ But, as Lambin pointed out some eighty years ago, this is an erroneous conclusion.⁵⁷ The error is obvious, as soon as it is realised that Mas'udi considered the Black sea and the sea of Azov to be one sea. Although he called the former 'Nitas' and the latter 'Mayotis', at times he used either of these names to cover both seas. He did so intentionally, and he is quite explicit on the point earlier in his work.⁵⁸ He also shows that he thought that the Don was a tributary

⁵⁴ *PVL*, I, pp. 34–9.

⁵⁵ Macoudi, *Les Prairies d'Or*, ed. and translated by C. Barbier de Meynard and Pavet de Courteille, II, Paris, 1863, pp. 18–20: 'Après l'an 300, cinq cents vaisseaux russes environ, montés chacun par cent hommes, entrèrent dans le canal de la mer Nitas, qui communique avec la mer des Khazars; là se tient un poste de Khazars fortement retranchés, chargés de barrer le passage à quiconque vient de la mer Nitas et à ceux qui viennent de l'intérieur des terres, où il y a un chemin qui mène, par eau, de la mer des Khazars à la mer Nitas. . . . Les vaisseaux russes, étant donc arrivés au poste qui garde l'entrée du canal, envoyèrent demander au roi la permission de traverser par eau son royaume et d'entrer dans le grand fleuve des Khazars, d'où ils devaient descendre jusqu'à la mer de ce nom. . . .'

⁵⁶ V. V. Grigor'yev, *Rossiya i Aziya, Sbornik issledovaniy i statey*, St Petersburg, 1876, p. 13; A. Yakubovsky, 'Ibn Miskaveykh o pokhode Rusov v Berdaa v 332=943/44 gg.' (*Vizantiyskiy Vremennik*, XXIV, Leningrad, 1926, p. 83); Nasonov, 'Tmutorokan' v istorii vostochnoy Yevropy' (*loc. cit.*, p. 82).

⁵⁷ N. Lambin, 'Tmutarakanskaya Rus' (*Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniya*, CLXXI, St Petersburg, 1874, pp. 73–7).

⁵⁸ Macoudi, *op. cit.*, pp. 272–3: 'La mer Nitas communique avec la mer Mayotis, et se joint à la Méditerranée par le canal de Constantinople qui s'y décharge. Comme nous l'avons dit, cette dernière tirant elle-même son origine de la mer Verte, toutes ces mers ne formeraient, suivant cette description, qu'une seule et même masse d'eau, dont toutes les parties se relient entre elles. . . . Le Nitas et le Mayotis ne doivent être qu'une seule et même mer, quoique le continent les resserre à un certain endroit, et qu'il y ait un canal qui les réunit l'une à l'autre. Si dans l'usage on a appelé Mayotis la portion la plus large de cette mer, celle où l'eau est la plus abondante, et Nitas la partie resserrée et peu profonde, il n'en est pas moins certain, que chacune de ces dénominations les

of the Volga.⁵⁹ These misconceptions have caused the confusion in the literature on the subject. A closer examination of the text shows that Lambin was right when he asserted that the Khazar garrison was stationed on the Don. Mas'udi could not have called the sea of Azov 'the sea of the Russians', if the approaches had been controlled by the Khazars.⁶⁰ Furthermore, a glance at a map should be sufficient to convince anyone that a Khazar garrison at Tmutarakan' could not have prevented a Russian fleet of 500 vessels from sailing through the Kerch straits. The Khazars were no sailors and the straits were eighteen miles wide. In the passage quoted Mas'udi also states that the garrison barred the way to invaders from the interior. If Tmutarakan' were meant this would suggest that it was their duty to prevent invaders from breaking out into the Black sea, and would be quite incomprehensible. Only if the outpost is assumed to have been on the Don is its purpose clear. It is known that there was a Khazar force at Sarkel on the Don,⁶¹ and this may be the one to which Mas'udi refers. At Sarkel it could have effectively sealed the only water route from the sea of Azov to the Caspian. Mas'udi's evidence does not then help to establish the date of the capture of Tmutarakan' by the Russians, but at least it does not exclude the possibility that they had gained a foothold on the shores of the sea of Azov by the time of the Transcaucasian campaign which he describes.

The treaty concluded between Russia and Byzantium in 944 takes us a step further. The treaty as a whole, like that of 911, aimed at regulating the trade relations between the two countries; but two of the clauses dealt with the obligations and jurisdiction of the Russians in the Black sea area, and they reveal that the Russians had considerable forces in the near vicinity of the Crimean peninsula. The relevant clauses read as follows:

With regard to the Land of Kherson. The Russian prince has no authority to wage war in those countries, in all the cities on that side; but if that country should not submit to you, then, if the Russian prince asks us for troops to wage war against it, we shall give him as many as he needs. . . .

désigne toutes deux, et si dans certains passages de ce livre nous disons Mayotis ou Nitas nous entendrons toujours par là aussi bien la portion large de cette mer que celle qui est étroite.' In the text the larger sea, the Black sea, is called 'Mayotis' and the smaller, the sea of Azov, 'Nitas', but this is no more than a copyist's error—cf. *Al-Mas'udi's Historical Encyclopaedia*, translated by Aloys Sprenger, I, London, 1841, p. 297.

⁵⁹ Macoudi, *op. cit.*, II, p. 15: 'Le fleuve des Khazars (the Volga), dans la partie supérieure de son cours, se décharge par un bras (the Don) dans un des golfes de la mer Nitas, qu'on peut nommer la mer des Russes, car ils sont les seuls qui y naviguent, et ils habitent sur l'une de ces côtes.'

⁶⁰ Lambin, *loc. cit.*

⁶¹ Grigor'yev, *op. cit.*, p. 13; M. I. Artamonov, 'Sarkel i nekotoryye drugiye ukrepleniya v severo-zapadnoy Khazarii' (*Sovetskaya arkheologiya*, VI, Moscow, 1940, pp. 130–65).

Should the Black Bulgars come and wage war in the Land of Kherson, we shall order the Russian prince not to permit them to do so, that they may not also do damage in his country.⁶²

From these clauses it follows that the Russian prince was in a better position than Byzantium to control Kherson. The terminology is also significant. A number of scholars have concluded that the 'Russian prince' could not have been Igor, since Igor is given his full title, grand prince (*velikiy knyaz'*), elsewhere in the treaty; and there is no reason why he should have been called merely 'Russian prince' (*knyaz' ruskii*) in these two clauses.⁶³ Such an interpretation of the terminology is fully justified, as the very title *velikiy knyaz'* suggests that there were also other, and subordinate, Russian princes. There is a clue to the area over which the Russian prince ruled in the reference to the Black Bulgars. If they can be identified, the Russian prince can be placed somewhere between them and the Crimean peninsula, as the treaty implies that the Black Bulgars were obliged to cross territory belonging to the Russian prince in order to reach Kherson.

Marquart,⁶⁴ Minorsky,⁶⁵ and Nikolayev⁶⁶ consider that the Black Bulgars were the Danubian Bulgarians; Vernadsky⁶⁷ and Runciman,⁶⁸ that they were the Volga Bulgars; Vestberg⁶⁹ places them either to the north or south of the Perekop ditch; Ilovaysky,⁷⁰ on both sides of the Kerch straits—i.e. in the eastern half of the Crimean peninsula and in the area of the Kuban' delta; finally, Zlatarski,⁷¹ Lambin,⁷² Nasonov and others⁷³ contend that they were the

⁶² *PVL*, I, p. 37: 'A o Korsun'stey strane. Yeliko zhe yest' gorodov na toy chasti, da ne imat' volosti, knyaz' ruskii, da voyuyet na tekh stranakh, i ta strana ne pokaryayetsya vam, i togda, ashche prosit' voy u nas knyaz' ruskii da voyuyet, da dam yemu, yeliko yemu budet trebe. . . . A o sikh, ozhe to, prikhodyat' chernii bolgare i voyuyut' v strane Korsun'stey, i velim knyazyu ruskomu, da ikh ne pushchayet: pakostyat' strane yego.'

⁶³ Lambin, *op. cit.*, p. 60; N. Znoyko, 'O pokhode Svyatoslava na vostok' (*Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniya*, VIII, 1907, pp. 280–2); Nasonov, *op. cit.*, pp. 90–1; Vernadsky, *Kievan Russia*, pp. 36–7.

⁶⁴ J. Marquart, *Osteuropäische und Ostasiatische Streifzüge*, Leipzig, 1903, p. 503.

⁶⁵ V. Minorsky, *Hudud Al-'Alam*, London, 1937, pp. 439–40.

⁶⁶ V. Nikolayev, *Slavyanobalgarskiyat faktor v kristianizatsiyata na Kievskia Rusiya*, Sofia, 1949, p. 30.

⁶⁷ Vernadsky, *Ancient Russia*, p. 223. In *The Origins of Russia*, p. 267, n. 1, Vernadsky is less sure and suggests as an alternative that they may have been that branch of the Bulgars which remained in the northern Caucasus after the dispersion of the Bulgars.

⁶⁸ S. Runciman, *A History of the First Bulgarian Empire*, London, 1930, p. 18.

⁶⁹ F. F. Vestberg, 'Zapiska Gotskogo Toparkha' (*Vizantiyskiy Vremennik*, XV, St Petersburg, 1908, pp. 243–9); *idem*, 'K analizu vostochnykh istochnikov o vostochnoy Yevrope' (*Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniya*, 13, 1908, pp. 386–9).

⁷⁰ Ilovaysky, *Istoriya Rossii*, I, p. 16; *idem*, *Razyskaniya o nachale Rusi*, Moscow, 1876, pp. 115–16.

⁷¹ V. N. Zlatarski, *Istoriya na balgarskata darzhava prez srednite vekove*, I/1, Sofia, 1918, p. 114.

⁷² Lambin, *op. cit.*, pp. 61–2.
⁷³ Nasonov, *op. cit.*, p. 90; M. I. Artamonov, 'Belaya Vezha' (*Sovetskaya arkhologiya*, XVI, 1952, pp. 44–5); B. D. Grekov, *Bor'ba Rusi za sozdaniye svoyego gosudarstva*, Moscow, 1945, p. 61.

descendants of Batbaian, who remained with his horde on the Kuban' in the 7th century, when, according to tradition, his other brothers migrated with their hordes to Pannonia, the middle Volga, and the Danube.⁷⁴

Too many of the attempts to solve this problem have been based largely on philological deductions which ignore the geographical and historical facts and frequently serve only to confuse the issue. For example, a study of the map makes it quite obvious that the treaty cannot have been referring to the Danubian Bulgarians. If these Danubian Bulgarians were in the habit of raiding Byzantine cities on the Black sea—and there is no reason to believe that they were—how could the Russians have restrained them? Danubian Bulgarian raiders on their way to the Crimean peninsula would not have crossed Russian territory at any point: they would have taken the most direct route—across the Black sea. In any case, Bulgaria and Byzantium were not at war with each other at any time during the second quarter of the 10th century after the death of Simeon in 927. On the contrary, the Bulgaria of Peter I was completely dominated by Byzantium.⁷⁵

The Volga Bulgar theory is also unrealistic. A distance of some 900 miles as the crow flies separated the Volga Bulgars from the Crimean peninsula. They were not a particularly warlike people; they lived by trading, and as far as is known, they had not the resources for long and hazardous expeditions of this nature.⁷⁶ It would be vain to look in the sources for so much as a hint of a raid made by them upon the Crimean peninsula either before or after 944. If, however, for the sake of argument it is assumed that they did attack the peninsula from time to time, it is still impossible to see how the Russians in Kiev or Tmutarakan' could have prevented them from doing so. Only the Khazars could have controlled them, as the Volga Bulgars would certainly have followed the most direct route to the Black sea, and this would have taken them through Khazaria. Macartney's suggestion that they might first have gone up the Volga and then down the Dnieper⁷⁷ is wildly improbable.

Vestberg demonstrated that the 'Inner Bulgars' who appear in oriental sources were the Black Bulgars mentioned in the treaty of 944 and also by Constantine Porphyrogenitus.⁷⁸ He concluded that

⁷⁴ Zlatarski, *op. cit.*, I/1, pp. 113–16.

⁷⁵ Zlatarski, *op. cit.*, I/2, Sofia, 1927, p. 532.

⁷⁶ For the Volga Bulgars, see B. D. Grekov, 'Volzhskiy bolgary v IX–X vekakh' (*Izbrannyye trudy*, II, Moscow, 1959, pp. 519–53).

⁷⁷ C. A. Macartney, 'On the Black Bulgars' (*Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher*, VIII, Athens, 1931, p. 157).

⁷⁸ The sources for the Black Bulgars are the treaty of 944 itself, and Constantine Porphyrogenitus who makes a passing reference to them in two chapters of *De Administrando Imperio*: 'The so-called black Bulgaria can also attack the Chazars' (p. 65). 'Into this same Maeotic sea run rivers many and great; on its northern side runs the Dnieper

they had lived on the shores of the sea of Azov.⁷⁹ But Zlatarski has shown that Vestberg was mistaken in placing them in the area of the Perekop ditch: the east coast of the sea of Azov is the only locality that fits in with all the facts at our disposal.⁸⁰ If it is agreed that this was the habitat of the Black Bulgars, and that they were the descendants of Batbaian's horde, it becomes possible to explain the meaning of their name. This branch of the Bulgars was called 'black' because the Khazars had subjugated it in the 7th century and made it their tributary. A parallel example of the use of the adjective 'black' can be seen in the name 'Black Caps' (*chernyye klobuki*), which was applied to some of the Turkish nomads who were hired as auxiliary troops by the Russians in their campaigns against the Polovtsy in the 11th and 12th centuries. The position of the Black Bulgars *vis-à-vis* Khazaria may not have been very different from that of the 'Black Caps' in the later period; for although the Black Bulgars paid tribute to the Khazars, Tabari, the latest source of information on Batbaian's horde, speaks of them as a semi-independent power.⁸¹ Thus, it may be assumed that the Khazars regarded the Black Bulgars as a foreign, but friendly, people, living within the Khazar sphere of influence, yet remaining a separate and distinct community, and ready to supply troops when requested to do so. If this was indeed the status of the Black Bulgars, they would have been able to make raids on neighbouring territories on their own initiative, as the treaty of 944 implies they did.

Given this identification of the Black Bulgars, it can now be seen that the Russians could have prevented them from attacking the Crimean peninsula only if they were already in possession of Tmutarakan' in 944,⁸² the year in which the treaty was concluded. The Russian prince referred to in the two clauses quoted above was undoubtedly the local ruler in Tmutarakan', and he was dependent upon the grand prince in Kiev. The actual location of the principality over which he ruled is further confirmed by the words 'on that side'

river, from which the Russians come through to black Bulgaria, and Chazaria and Syria' (p. 187). It has been argued that since Porphyrogenitus, who was very well informed and who elsewhere gives a full description of the area, does not specifically mention the Black Bulgars on the east coast of the sea of Azov, they cannot have lived there. But the same objection can be raised to any other locality which has been suggested as their habitat. The point is that Porphyrogenitus simply does not name the exact area they inhabited, and yet it was somewhere in the region he described. Moreover, the order in which the three countries are named in the second quotation can only indicate the Azov coast, as the Russians, having left the Dnieper, would have passed through Black Bulgaria after entering the sea of Azov and before reaching Khazaria. In ignoring the evidence of the oriental sources, I follow Vestberg, 'Zapiska Gotskogo Toparkha', p. 244, who considered it too fragmentary and corrupted to be reliable.

⁷⁹ Vestberg, 'K analizu vostochnykh istochnikov', pp. 386-9.

⁸⁰ Zlatarski, *op. cit.*, I/1, pp. 92, n. 4, 96-100.

⁸¹ Macartney, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

⁸² Parkhomenko, *op. cit.*, p. 115; Golubinsky, *op. cit.*, I/1, p. 47.

(*na toy chastī*), which may be taken to mean 'on the other side of the Kerch straits'.

There still remain some obscurities in the two clauses of the treaty. It is not at all clear to whom the personal and possessive pronouns refer. Shakhmatov was of the opinion that the confusion was due to the faulty translation of the treaty from Greek into Russian. 'We' and 'our' in the Greek original should naturally have become 'you' and 'your' in the translation, but in places these pronouns were translated literally and the consequent change in meaning was overlooked. For this reason, he considered that 'you' in the phrase 'if that country should not submit to you' (*i ta strana ne pokaryayetsya vam*) refers to Byzantium.⁸³ This interpretation should be accepted; but it is possible to go somewhat further. 'Us' and 'we' in the phrases 'if the Russian prince asks us for troops to wage war against it, we shall give him as many as he needs' (*ashche prosit' voy u nas knyaz' ruskii da voyuyet, da dam yemu, yeliko yemu budet trebe*) undoubtedly refer to Igor, the grand prince. In other words, Igor agreed that his vassal should refrain from attacking Byzantine possessions on the Crimean peninsula, and also that he should watch over Byzantine interests in the area. Should Byzantium's authority be challenged or her territory violated, it was the duty of the Russian prince of Tmutarakan' to restore the *status quo* with the aid, if necessary, of the grand prince. Such an interpretation clears up a point that has troubled some scholars in the past. As the clause stood, it implied that Byzantium had agreed to put her own troops at the disposal of the Russian prince in the event of trouble in Kherson. It was difficult to understand why she should not have sent an independent expedition under her own generals, if the need arose to send an army to reconquer the city.⁸⁴ The difficulty disappears once it is realised that it was Igor who undertook to provide additional troops.

The two clauses may therefore be translated freely as follows:

With regard to the Land of Kherson. The Russian prince of Tmutarakan' has no right to attack any of the cities on the other side of the Kerch straits; but if the latter should cease to submit to Byzantium, and the Russian prince of Tmutarakan' then asks the Grand Prince Igor for troops to reconquer it for Byzantium, the Grand Prince Igor will give him as many troops as he needs for this purpose. . . . Should the Black Bulgars come and attack the Land of Kherson, the Grand Prince Igor will order the Russian prince of Tmutarakan' not to permit them to do so.

Unfortunately, the treaty only proves that Tmutarakan' was a

⁸³ A. A. Shakhmatov, 'Povest' Vremennykh Let i yeyo istochniki' (*Trudy otdela drevnerusskoy literatury*, IV, Moscow, 1940, pp. 115-16).

⁸⁴ Cf. *PVL*, II, p. 292.

Russian base in 944: it does not tell us when the town had been captured. But in the absence of any earlier evidence, it has to be recognised that the exact date can only be guessed at. Nasonov makes out a very plausible case for the year 944.⁸⁵ He shows that in this year the Russians reached the Caspian in their Transcaucasian campaign by crossing overland from the sea of Azov, keeping just to the north of the Caucasian mountains; and he assumes that they must first have captured Tmutarakan'.⁸⁶ Only part of this argument can be accepted. It is certainly reasonable to conclude that the Russians could not have undertaken such a campaign without a base at Tmutarakan'; but it is less easy to justify the belief that they had initially set off from distant Kiev. The oriental sources used by Nasonov to establish the route followed by the Russians in 944 indicate that the Alans and other north Caucasian peoples were their allies.⁸⁷ It seems hardly likely, therefore, that the Russians had gained a foothold on the Taman' peninsula for the first time in this same year. It would have taken them a considerable time to establish friendly relations with the surrounding tribes; and the overland crossing would not have been ventured upon by troops who had only recently arrived from the north by water and who had no knowledge of the territories through which they would have to pass. Furthermore, the ultimate objective of the Russians in 944 was the seizure of Berdaa in Azerbaijan. Ibn-Miskawaih's description of the capture of the city makes it quite clear that the Russians were not out merely to loot it and then to withdraw with their booty. He writes:

I was informed by Abu'l-'abbas Ibn Nudar and a number of careful enquirers how the Russians when they hurried into the town made a proclamation to the following effect to the citizens: 'There is no dispute between us on the matter of religion; we only desire the sovereignty; it is our duty to treat you well and yours to be loyal to us.'⁸⁸

Later, when the inhabitants of Berdaa refused to accept Russian domination and continued to attack the invaders, the Russians ordered them to evacuate the city within four days. It is evident, therefore, that the Russians had intended to remain in the city and to establish a permanent base.⁸⁹ We can hardly believe that all this had been planned in Kiev. The operation would have been much

⁸⁵ Nasonov, *op. cit.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 84 ff.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 86; cf. also B. Dorn, 'Kaspij' (*Zapiski Imperatorskoy Akademii Nauk*, XXVI, 1, St Petersburg, 1875, pp. 497-8); Gregory Abu'l Faraj (Bar-Hebraeus), *The Chronography*, translated and edited by E. A. Wallis Budge, I, London, 1932, p. 163.

⁸⁸ *The Concluding Portion of 'The Experience of Nations', The Eclipse of the Abbasid Caliphate*, edited and translated by H. F. Amedroz and D. S. Margoliouth, II, Oxford, 1921, p. 68.

⁸⁹ A. Yakubovsky, 'Ibn Miskaveyh o pokhode Rusov v Berdaa v 332=943/44 gg.', pp. 63-70, 92.

too complicated and its outcome too uncertain, as success would have depended upon the preliminary capture of Tmutarakan'. Moreover, the circumstances of the campaign argue a familiarity with the north Caucasian area that the Russians in Kiev could not have possessed. For these reasons, it must be assumed that Tmutarakan' had already been in Russian hands for a number of years by 944. The only other time that the Russians are known to have been in the area is during the campaign of 913-14, and it seems most likely that it was then that the town was captured. Nasonov dismisses the possibility, because he considers that Mas'udi has proved that there was a Khazar garrison in Tmutarakan' in 913.⁹⁰ But, as we have seen, this is a misinterpretation of Mas'udi's evidence.⁹¹

All the evidence points to the fact that the Russians captured Tmutarakan' in 913, when they passed through the Kerch straits on their way to raid the Caspian *via* the Don and the Volga. Khazar domination of the waterway to the Caspian prevented them from making another raid by the same route; but as they became familiar with the surrounding country and the neighbouring peoples, so they realised that it was possible to circumvent the Khazars by taking the overland route. When the Alans and other local tribes agreed to join them in an expedition, the way was clear. The Russians descended once more upon the Caspian—this time with the aim of creating a base to the south of the mountain barrier, a stepping-stone to the orient similar to the one they had created in Tmutarakan' some thirty years before.

⁹⁰ Nasonov, *op. cit.*, pp. 82, 90.

⁹¹ See above, pp. 507-8.